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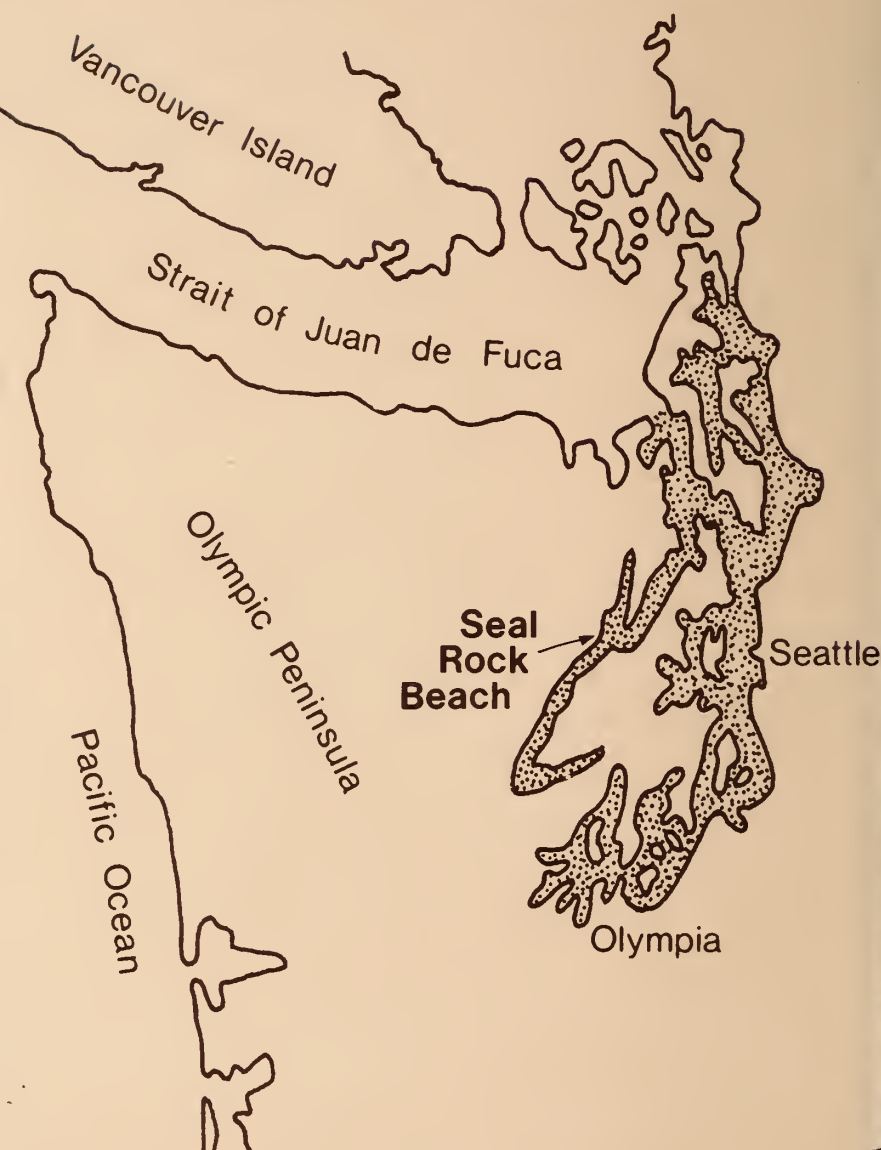
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SEAL ROCK BEACH... A MARINE ENVIRONMENT



AN IDEAL HABITAT

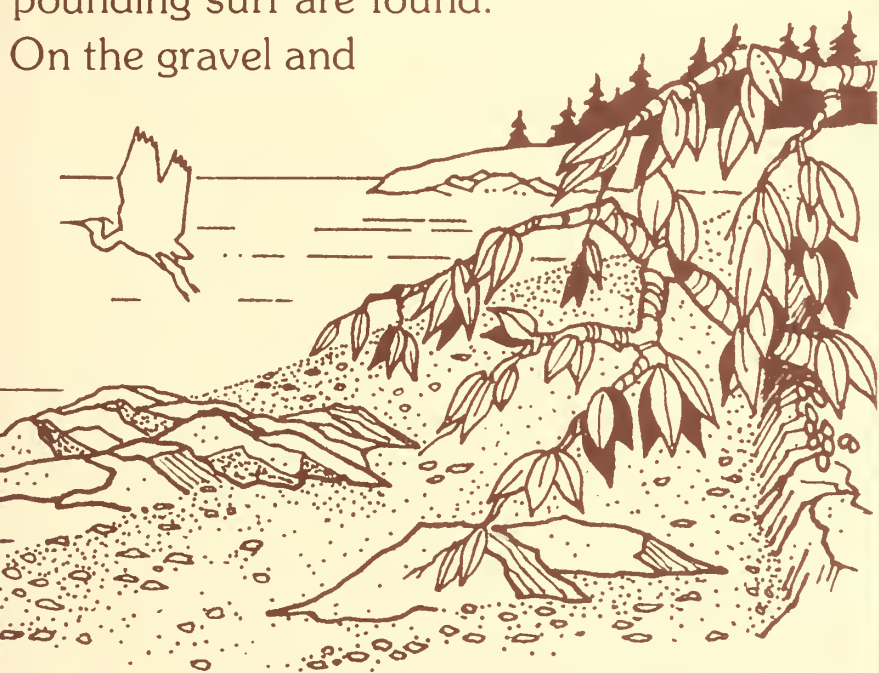


Puget Sound is characterized by numerous narrow channels and small inlets and bays. It occupies an area of over 700 square nautical miles and has some 2,000 miles of irregular shoreline. Protected from the ocean waves, the waters of the Sound are relatively calm. This protection plus a constant flow of clean ocean water from the Strait of Juan de Fuca produces an ideal habitat for many aquatic organisms.

BEACH TYPES

Four types of beaches are commonly found along the shoreline of Puget Sound — rock, boulders, sand and mud. Often two or more types will be closely associated. Combinations of rock and boulders, sand and rock, and rock and mud are found at Seal Rock Beach. The living conditions vary markedly in these different shores and therefore each supports a different marine community of plants and animals. On the rock and boulder beaches, living creatures that need a “foothold” or protection from the pounding surf are found.

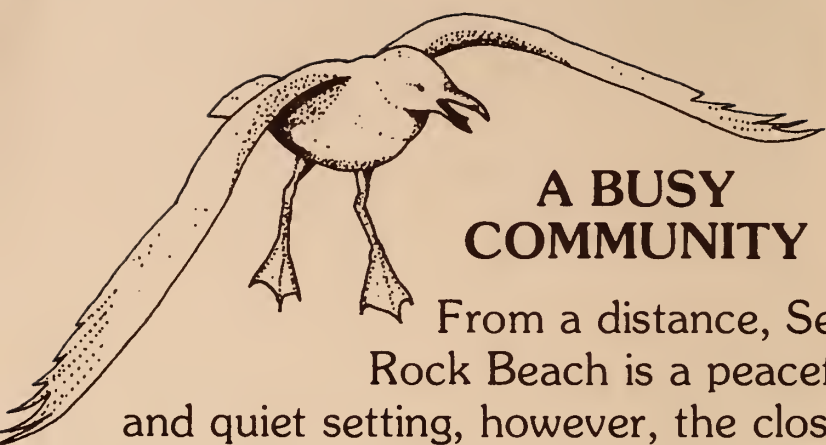
On the gravel and



sandy beaches, the inhabitants must be specialized for living in a shifting environment and therefore are mostly burrowing types with special equipment for “digging in.”

Acorn Barnacle





A BUSY COMMUNITY

From a distance, Seal Rock Beach is a peaceful and quiet setting, however, the closer one gets to the water's edge the more active it becomes. The beach is a busy community full of life. Upon close examination, notice the light colored shells attached to the rocks. These stationary shellfish are Pacific Oysters, the most commonly found at Seal Rock Beach. The tiny purple shore crab, too small to eat but fun to observe, are usually found hiding in the small tidal pools or among the rocks. Gulls are constantly searching the beach for their daily meal, while the patient Great Blue Heron can often be seen standing motionless in shallow water, waiting for small fish to swim by. Occasionally a watchful observer may see harbor seals swimming off shore.

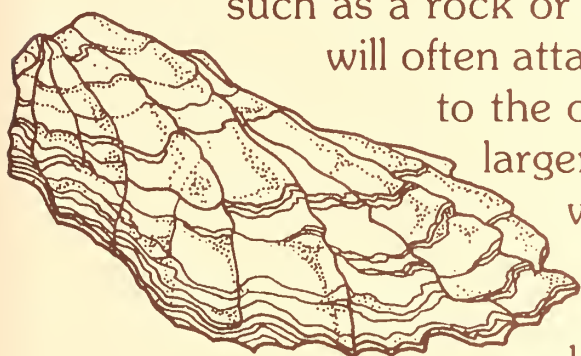


Harbor Seal

BETWEEN TIDES

Between the tides there are many different forms of sea life in Puget Sound. The shellfish are the more noticeable and are prized for their high protein value and wide variety of unique tastes. Oysters, clams and crabs are the most common shellfish harvested from Seal Rock Beach.

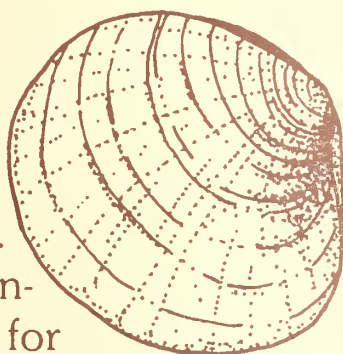
Pacific Oyster — A single female oyster will spawn 200 million eggs in a season. Following fertilization, the eggs develop into minute shelled larvae and spend 3-4 weeks drifting freely with the tide before instinctively attaching themselves to a clean, solid surface such as a rock or boulder. They



will often attach themselves to the outside shell of larger adult oysters where they will be destroyed if the large shell is removed from the beach. Once

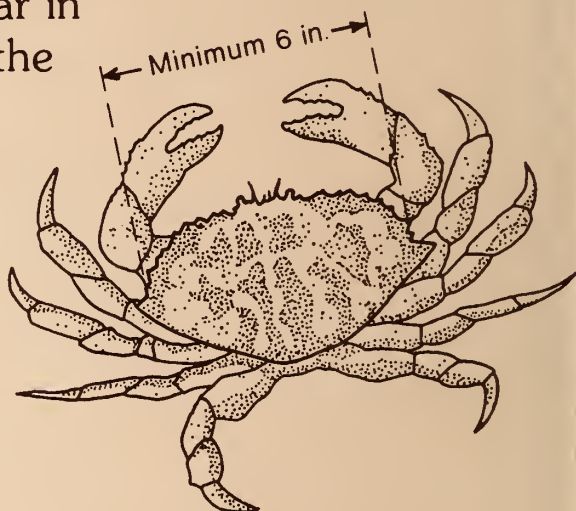
attached, the oyster takes 3-4 years to reach an eatable size. The smallest size to look for is three inches across the shell. Small oysters lack enough “meat” and are therefore wasted if opened. A special tool, called an oyster knife, is usually used to open these shellfish. Oysters can be eaten raw or cooked by deep frying, steaming or broiling.

Butter Clams — These medium sized clams grow up to five inches in length. Following a summer spawning, the small larvae swim for a period of time before settling in a sandy gravel beach. Butter clams are the most abundant hardshell clam found along Seal Rock Beach. They are easily identified



by their strongly ridged, oval shaped shell with a prominent hinge ligament. Butter clams are usually steamed open and then dipped in butter.

Dungeness Crab — Eggs are laid in the early summer and then carried by the female until they hatch in the late winter or early spring. The crab larvae swim freely in the water for a year before they first appear in adult form on the bottom of the beach. It takes the male crab about four years to reach the legal size of six inches.



THE POTLATCH

The Indians inhabiting the Puget Sound area were the first to utilize the marine life found along this productive shoreline. Much of their food was taken from the water and beach. On special occasions, such as the marriage of an important person or birth of a potential heir to one of the groups' titles, a potlatch was given by the chief. This ceremonial event involved a guest-host relationship between a local group, hosting the affair, and a visiting group. First came the

feast of oysters, clams, crabs and salmon. Most of the food was eaten during the feast but some of it was to be taken home by the guests. The potlatch was the main event in which other forms of goods were distributed. The gifts were given in the name of the individual being honored at the potlatch. The first and largest gift went to the highest ranking guest and so on down the line.

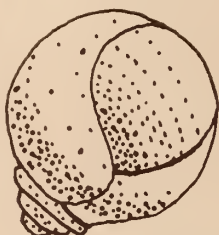
SHELLFISH FOR TOMORROW

As thousands of visitors continue to come to Seal Rock each year to camp, picnic, explore the beach and harvest shellfish, it becomes more and more important that each of us do our part to protect and maintain the beach and its sea life. The following are ways that we can ensure an ample supply of shellfish for tomorrow:

- **Obey State Laws** pertaining to bag limits, sizes, leaving shells on the beach, etc.
- **Honor beach closures** for they allow certain shellfish to establish themselves and are needed at times to avoid over-harvesting.
- **Watch where you step.** Shellfish are easily crushed by heavy and careless feet.



Purple Shore Crab



BETTER UNDERSTANDING

The shoreline of Seal Rock Beach is an important habitat for marine flora and fauna. This same beach provides many recreational opportunities. Oyster picking, clam digging, crabbing, scuba diving, swimming and beachcombing are all exciting activities that take place at this popular beach. The Forest Service hopes that you will enjoy your visit to Seal Rock Beach and come away with a better understanding of this unique marine environment.

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